



WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE
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71ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony for the Assembly Committee of Veterans and Military Affairs
Assembly Bill 425
Designating a State Medal of Honor Day

Chair Hilgenberg and members of the Assembly Committee of Veterans and Military Affairs, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 425 and for holding a public hearing on this bill.

- The Medal of Honor is the highest military decoration awarded by the United States government. It is bestowed on a member of the United States armed forces who distinguishes themselves "conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his (or her) life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States." Because of the nature of its criteria, the medal is often awarded posthumously.
- The medal is frequently called the *Congressional* Medal of Honor, stemming from its award by the Department of Defense "in the name of Congress" though the official and correct title is Medal of Honor.
- The first formal system for rewarding acts of individual gallantry by American soldiers was established by George Washington on August 7, 1782, when he created the Badge of Military Merit, designed to recognize "any singularly meritorious action."
- The Medal of Honor was created during the Civil War, by Iowa Senator James W. Grimes. The Commanding General of the United States Army did not approve the proposal, but the medal did come into use in the Navy. Public Resolution 82, containing a provision for a Navy Medal of Valor, was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln on December 21, 1861. The Army followed suit in July of 1862 and since the beginning of World War II, the medal has been awarded for extreme bravery beyond the call of duty while engaged in action against an enemy. Arising from these criteria, approximately 60% of the medals earned during and after World War II have been awarded posthumously.

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- There have been 65 Wisconsin natives or residents that have been awarded the Medal of Honor, the most famous of which was Major Richard Bong, the United States' highest-scoring air ace, having shot down at least 40 Japanese aircraft during World War II. He was a fighter pilot in the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) – there are four that are currently living.
- On March 5, 2007, the United States Congress passed, by a unanimous vote, a concurrent resolution to recommend a national Medal of Honor Day on March 25.
- The date of March 25th was chosen to highlight this special day because it was on March 25 (1863) that the first Medals of Honor were presented.
- The creation of a state Medal of Honor Day will not only honor the 65 state Medal of Honor recipients, but will be a reminder of the dedication and service that our military members provide to protect our freedoms.
- In closing, I would like to thank my constituent, James D Hydinger, that brought this issue to my and Senator Lassa's attention.

Louis Molepske, Jr.
 State Representative
 71st Assembly District